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SUBJECT: AFGHAN MFA REBUKES UN SRSG ON ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMENTS

Classified By: PolCouns Annie Pforzheimer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) In a sharply-worded statement November 6, Afghan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta sharply rebuked UNAMA SRSG Kai Eide for comments at a November 5 press conference. Spanta accused Eide, and "some political and diplomatic circles and propaganda agencies of certain foreign countries" of disrespecting Afghanistan's national sovereignty "by issuing instructions concerning the composition of Afghan government organs and political policy of Afghanistan."

¶2. (SBU) Spanta's statement said that Eide "delivered comments which exceeded international norms and his authority as a representative of an impartial international organization." The MFA's accusations came on the heels of a week of public statements from global leaders, including President Obama, Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen, all of whom called for reduced corruption in the next Karzai administration, along with more private but voluminous foreign advice on what to say in his inaugural speech and whom to appoint, or not to appoint, to his cabinet. Spanta's statement acknowledged that "consultation and discussion for implementation of our joint objectives" was essential, but asserted the necessity of respecting Afghanistan's sovereignty.

¶3. (SBU) At his November 5 media event, Eide called for the new Afghan government to be composed of "competent, reform-oriented personalities" and for "a vigorous fight against corruption." He asserted that those who think the international community will stay in Afghanistan indefinitely, regardless of the problems on the ground, are wrong. Public opinion in donor and troop contributing countries, he said, determines whether the international community will continue to play a role in Afghanistan. "We are at a critical juncture," he said, and stipulated that significant progress will have to be made in reducing corruption and improving good governance in order to assure continued international involvement. Eide made two direct references to the recent detention of senior officials working at Kabul International Airport on suspicion of fraud, congratulating the Ministry of Finance for their work on the case.

¶4. (C) Comment: In a phone conversation with POLCouns, Davood Moradian, Senior Advisor to Minister Spanta, said November 7 that the MFA had already spoken with UNAMA and agreed that the issue would not be escalated any further. While Spanta's remarks were pointedly directed at Eide, the message of exasperation was clearly aimed more broadly at the international community. The ratcheting up of criticism and advice to President Karzai by the major international players seems to have got under Spanta's skin, if not also Karzai's, as he prepares for his inauguration. Spanta will leave with Karzai for a couple days' rest at an OIC conference in Istanbul November 9-10, during which Spanta promised to review with Karzai our proposed inputs to his inaugural speech. Ambassador Eikenberry and Karzai have tentative plans to meet on the subject on November 11 or 12.

EIKENBERRY